Bizarre Theories Offered

Tips, Tipsters Probed

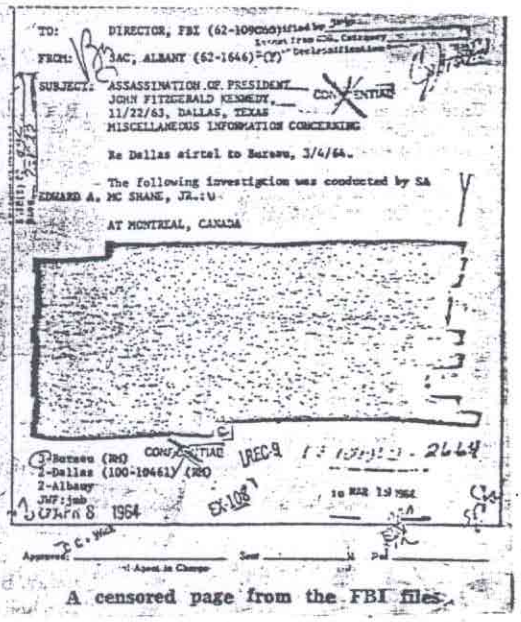
By John Jacobs and Ronald Kessler
Washington Post Staff Writers

In investigating the assassination of President Kennedy, the FBI pursued tips from sources ranging from shoeshine boys to deranged spouses; and one agent even speculated that some chalk handwriting found inside a boxcar in Newport, Mich., could have been Lee Harvey Oswald's and should be investigated.

The 40,001 pages of FBI documents relating to the John F. Kennedy assassination, released yesterday under a Freedom of Information Act request, reveal that the bureau, as might be expected, was eager to enhance its reputation, preserve its investigative territory from encroachment by other government agencies and investigate the backgrounds of people who sent in tips.

An example of the thoroughness with which the FBI followed its leads, no matter how seemingly

See GLEANINGS, A12, Col. 1



TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (62-109060) filed by
FROM: SAC, ALBANY (62-1646)(P)
SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY, 11/22/63, DALLAS, TEXAS MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION CONCERNING
CONFIDENTIAL

Re Dallas airtel to Bureau, 3/4/64.

The following investigation was conducted by SA EDWARD A. MC SHANE, JR.:

AT MONTREAL, CANADA

[redacted]

Bureau (RM) CONFIDENTIAL
2-Dallas (100-10461) (RM)
2-Albany
JMF:jmb
MAR 8 1964

REC-9 62-109060-2664

Special Agent in Charge

A censored page from the FBI files.

GLEANINGS, From A1

inconsequental, was a bulletin from the Miami field office to Director J. Edgar Hoover on Nov. 23, 1963, the day after the assassination. The Miami agent relayed a tip from a shoeshine boy that a Miami Beach gangster, known as "Jimmy Blue Eyes" was heard to remark: "They should have gotten the whole family, including Robert Kennedy."

Prior to a gubernatorial election in Louisiana, a source overheard a man in a Stetson hat say, "If we can't put a man in by ballot, we'll get rid of this one with a 30-30." The FBI investigated men around the state Capitol who wore Stetsons, discovering that five state senators and three state representatives did.

The files also contain a report about a Portsmouth, Va., woman who forged a letter in which her ex-husband confessed to the assassination.

Something about the Kennedy assassination seemed to provoke people's paranoid fears and resulted in a large number of bizarre predictions, hypotheses or leads to follow.

One man volunteered that Jack Ruby, who shot Oswald while he was being transferred from the Dallas city jail, did card tricks in Muncie, Indiana, in 1942 while visiting leftist relatives who ran a jewelry store. Another woman said her husband's relatives were "as mean as rattlesnakes" and could have killed Kennedy. She said her husband had been trying to drive her craxy for 16 years, but he was the one who was really nuts.

An anonymous caller informed the FBI that the Irish Republican Army was coming to Dallas to "commit mayhem on that city." The bureau relayed that grim message to the State Department, the CIA, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service in addition to cabling unknown parties in London.

An Italian from Vicenza wrote Hoover offering his services in the investigation. "I think to know whom has had the idea of shotting [sic] J.F. Kennedy," Gazzotto Amedeo wrote on April 2, 1964. "Do not think that I am an insane person I have (unintelligible) all the vicissitudes of his death."

It was noted on the bottom of his letter that he was interviewed "in the presence of the 163d Military Intelligence Battalion, U.S. Forces."

And then there was the "four jacks" theory. This contribution to the investigation was sent in anonymously. "J.F. Kennedy was killed by a rat named Jack Webber," the theory went, "and Oswald was killed by another rat named Jack Ruby and Webber was done away by Jack Prasher and his body done away with. There are four jacks named here and there is four jacks in a deck of cards and Webber was a partner of Ruby in crime and Oswald was ready to tell what he knew about Kennedy's death when he was done away with by a rat of low rating."

Alice Kinner of Albany, N.Y., wrote in that she dreamed about Kennedy's death two weeks before it happened. All the details were the same, except that in her dream his initials were in "big, black, bold print" in the newspaper, but "in real life, it was ordinary print."

Jack Mitchell Clay, of Rockford, Ill., informed the bureau that if Oswald hadn't killed the President, he would have. He further advised, according to an April 9, 1964, FBI memo, "that he would shoot any police officer or Negro who set foot on his porch."

One informant clued the bureau in to the possibility that a black waiter at a party in an Arlington motel "looked suspicious." He could have been connected, the informant said. A Nov. 27, 1963, memo summarizing this call noted that he thought perhaps even Richard Nixon arranged the assassination, but he could furnish no proof.

An FBI bulletin the day after the assassination singled out an El Paso man convicted for sending an extortion note to his mother. The El Paso field office thought he would fall "within the category of bureau interest" in the investigation because his probation officer thought he remembered that the convict wrote a threatening letter to the President in 1959.

Not content to simply investigate tips, the FBI also investigated the people who gave them.

After then Rep. Pat Minor Martin (R-Calif.) forwarded a constituent's letter suggesting that Oswald had really intended to shoot then-Texas Gov. John B. Connally, the FBI wrote in its own files, "Buffles (Bureau files) contain limited contact with Cong. Martin (R-Calif.) and there is no derogatory information concerning him."

When the FBI learned that William Manchester had been chosen by Kennedy's widow to write a history of the assassination, the bureau noted in its files, "Bureau files contain no derogatory information [on Manchester]."

Karl Zerk of Los Angeles suggested in a letter to the Warren Commission that right-wing groups might have been behind the assassination and noted that Hoover's book "Masters of Deceit," had long been the "bible" of such extremists.

The letter was obtained by the FBI, which concluded Zerk had no information on the assassination. However, Hoover ordered a background check on Zerk, commenting that "... the general tone of his communication is insulting and prejudicial to us."

In other cases, the FBI directed its investigative zeal at other government agencies that might embarrass the bureau.

In a Dec. 18, 1963, memo, the FBI complained that the Secret Service was trying to establish that the bureau had had personal contact with Oswald and his wife prior to the dates already acknowledged by the FBI.

Characterizing this as displaying "more than normal interest in our activities than would be considered necessary in the investigation of the President's assassination," the memo recommended determining the purpose of the inquiries and obtaining a copy of the Secret Service's report before it was to be submitted to the Warren Commission.

When then-U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Thomas C. Mann attempted to pursue a possible Cuban connection to the assassination, Hoover wrote that he was "one of these pseudo-investigators, a Sherlock Holmes."

Commenting on a request from the Warren Commission that the FBI try to determine the exact speed of the presidential motorcade when Kennedy was shot, Hoover said, "OK. It sounds like a lot of poppycock to me."

Despite the crackpots and the weird allegations, the FBI managed to keep a straight face. One deadpan report described an investigation of the "Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness (Sic) of Times (Sic)." Another quoted Oswald's wife, Marina, as describing where she and Lee stood on the subject of America:

"Me like America. Lee no like America. Lee like moon."